

Submitter: J F

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure: HB4002

Dear Oregon Lawmakers,

I am submitting written testimony to oppose HB 4002 and share my serious concerns about House Bill 4002.

I am a nursing student and a long time community volunteer. I am also someone with lived experience of the harmful effects of the carceral system, especially when utilized as the default response to drug use, addiction, and mental health emergencies. Isolation, poverty, and inequitable access to healthcare, housing, and other social needs feed cycles of chaos.

When I am suffering, I look for ways to alleviate my pain. What right do you have to punish my friends and neighbors for doing the same? Attempting to lock away the people in our streets as problems, instead of human beings, is deeply disturbing. We must turn toward our fellow humans with compassion and a commitment to our communal health. I don't have a simple solution - all I know is that we must keep our shared humanity at the center, and HB 4002 throws all of that away.

We have seen time and time again that police are ill-equipped to respond humanely or adequately to public health needs. It is apparent that the lawmakers and the ruling class are enacting a war on the poor under the masquerade of law and order. We cannot rely on the police and the jail system to create shifts in our society - this feeds the cycles of violence, isolation, and oppression. Measure 110 was just the beginning of a move toward a more humane, health-focused approach to addiction and community well-being. Building new approaches and healing the effects the 50+ years of the so-called "war on drugs" will take time and commitment.

So many of us are barely surviving our day-to-day lives. We cannot pay rent, we cannot afford to eat, we who are members of racialized groups live in fear of police violence, and you, Oregon lawmakers, owe it to us to help build the architecture for a society that values human life.

I urge you to expand treatment services, without criminalizing addiction and doing irreparable harm to the most vulnerable Oregonians.